4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17

The *Nyamwanga* and *Iwa* of Abercorn and Masama districts, Northern Rhodesia, are in areas where the density is between 4 and 7 per square mile, and they number less than 20,000.[1]

Tanganyika Peoples[2]

Tribe	District	Total population	Total children	Percentage of children to adults	Percentage of males to females		Increase since 1921
					Adults	Children	
Kukwe	Rungwe	68,197	29,934	74	51	110	..
Seria	Mbeya	10,755	..	..	..	..	..
Nyakyusa	Rungwe	80,092	37,799	..	..	..	..
	Mbeya	2,957	1,030	..	..	..	..
	Other districts	775	551	87	57	102	34,576

Populations of less than 50,000 Persons

Tribe	District	Total population
Kinga	Njombe	27,036
Lambya	Rungwe	12,403
Ndali	Rungwe	22,834
Nyamwanga	Mbeya	10,147
Nyika	Mbeya and Ufipa	25,179
Pangwa	Njombe	20,533
Wanji	Njombe	20,397
Wanda	Mbeya and Ufipa	5,754

LINGUISTIC DATA

According to Doke's classification *Ngonde* is one of the five important languages of the east central sub-zone of Bantu languages, and is spoken in Tanganyika to the north end of Lake Nyasa, where it is known as *Nyakyusa*.[3] In language as well as culture, the Ngonde of Nyasaland are identical with the Nyakyusa of Tanganyika.[4] According to Guthrie's classification, many of the tribes, whose affiliation is not known on cultural or historical grounds, may be attached, on linguistic grounds, to speakers of the Tumbuka group of languages: *Wenya*, *Lambia*, and *Wandia*.[5]

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The *Kinga* inhabit the inaccessible heights of the north and west portion of the Livingstone mountains, which rise to 10,000 ft.[6]

Nyakyusa country is bounded on the south by Lake Nyasa and the Songwe river, on the east by the wall of the Livingstone range, and on the west by the Ndali hills. They live between the two walls of the Great Rift valley. In the north the rift is interrupted and closed by the extinct volcano Rungwe (10,000 ft.), from whose base the land drops in hills and little plateaux to the lake-shore plain. The soil is not very rich,

[1] Orde Brown, 1, 1938, maps.
[2] *Census of the Native Population*, 1931, Tables VI and VII.
[3] Doke, 1945, p. 66.
[4] Wilson, 5, 1939, p. 8.
[5] Guthrie, 1948, p. 81.
[6] Du Plessis, 1929, p. 323.

4 Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

especially in the north, but as between 100 and 130 in. of rain usually falls annually, the country is one of the most fertile parts of Tanganyika. Two crops a year are often grown on the same patch of ground. There is no tsetse, and cattle flourish. Parts of the country are stony and mountainous, others, especially the lake-shore plain, are of deep soil. On the higher ground there are many old volcanic craters filled with rich, moist soil, more fertile than the surrounding land.[1]

Ngonde country is bounded by Lake Nyasa on the east and by the Misuko hills on the west. It is mountainous except for a belt of low-lying country, about 6–10 miles wide, along the lake shore. The whole district is well watered and well wooded except for some of the higher peaks and the lake plains. Banana-trees are cultivated throughout the district. Game is plentiful. Average annual rainfall at Karonga in 1922–32 was 41·2 in. Average mean temperature was 74° F., seldom rising above 95° F.[2]

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY

CULTIVATION

The *Kinga* are agriculturists, cultivating wheat, peas, and potatoes, and latterly also oats and barley. They own a moderate amount of cattle, and many sheep and goats. They are skilful smiths.[3] The *Kisi* and *Sandia* around the north-west coast of the lake are fishermen and agriculturists, growing some millet and maize.[4] The *Nyika* are agriculturists and cattle-rearers; the *Lambia* do not rear much cattle; the *Ndali* have large herds, and cultivate bananas in the valleys.[5] The *Nyamwanga* keep sheep and goats and grow maize, beans, and millet.[6]

The *Matengo* have a system of hill-side cultivation of their own, which prevents erosion. When forced into concentrations in the caves in Litembo and Langiro to escape the Ngoni raids, they developed the pit-system of hoeing: the grass is cut and laid in 2-ft. wide lines in a grid of 6-ft. squares. The hole in the middle of the square is hoed by a woman, who throws up the earth on to the grass squares. The crops are planted in the raised beds and weeds are thrown into the pit to rot, forming compost for the following year. After one season the pit becomes the raised bed and the beds the pit, and the system is repeated in following years. With proper succession of crops the gardens may be kept in use for ten years before fertility begins to fail. Maize, millet, and wheat flourish; root crops do not thrive under this system, nor does tobacco. The pit-system is now found mainly at Litembo, and is being abandoned elsewhere.[7]

The *Ngonde* and *Nyakyusa* are primarily cattle-rearers and banana-cultivators. They have a very similar culture, but only the latter has been described in detail. Consequently, the following summary refers to the Nyakyusa, unless the contrary is indicated.

The Nyakyusa practise subsistence agriculture by intensive cultivation with rotation of crops. As wide shifting cultivation is not practised, villages are relatively stable. They grow a great quantity of crops—maize, millet, sweet potatoes, beans, ground-nuts, cow-peas, cassava, and rice in the plain. Grass is hoed in for manure. The *Sukwa*, in the Misuko hill area (Ngonde country), grow field-peas and wheat on a small scale.[8]

[1] Wilson, 3, 1938, pp. 5–6.
[2] Murray, 1932, pp. 201–3; Dixey, 1928.
[3] *Handbook of German East Africa*, p. 64.
[4] Ibid., pp. 62–3.
[5] Ibid., pp. 66–7.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Pike, 1938.
[8] Murray, 1932, p. 207.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

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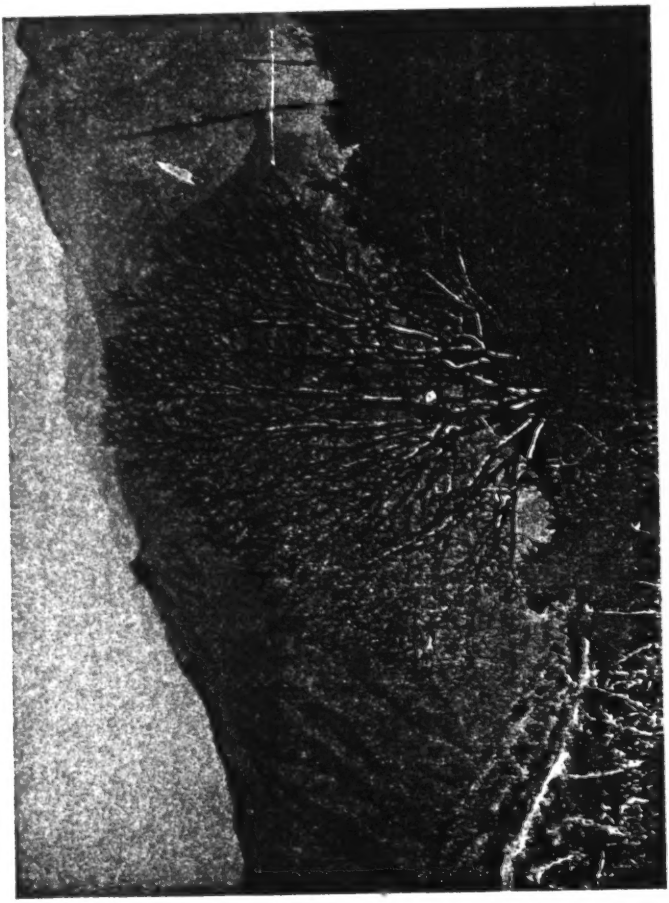

2. THE ROAD TO LWEMBE

[Facing p. 15]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

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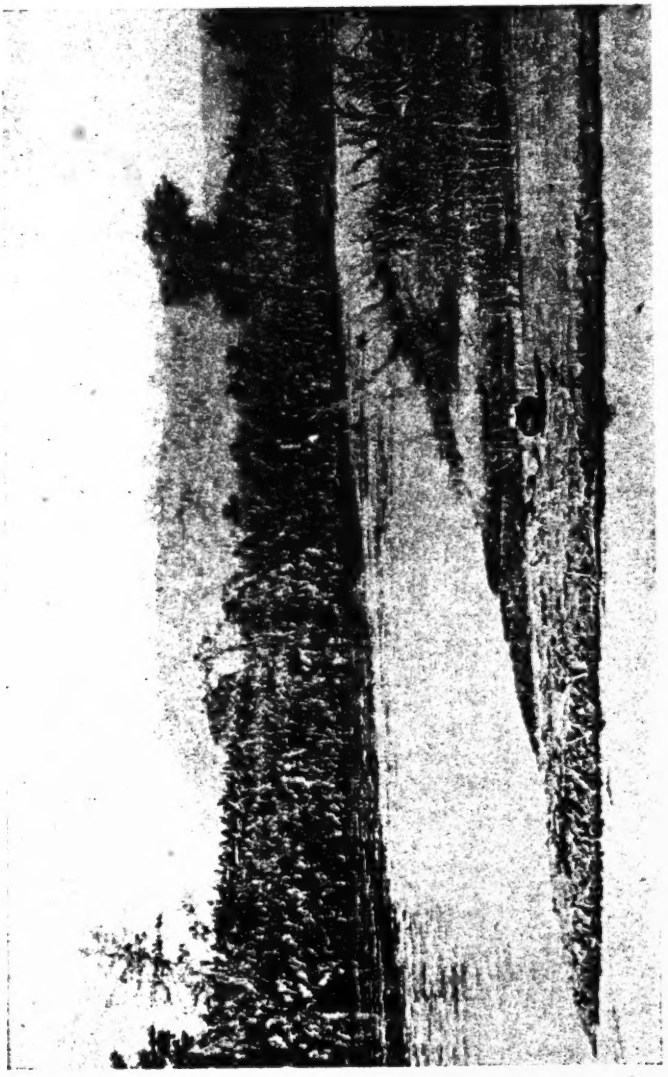
[415]



3. MBANDE HILL

[facing p. 22]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

CHAPTER V

SACRIFICES AT THE GROVES OF CHIEFS

(*a*) THE PLACE, OCCASION, AND FORM OF SACRIFICE

778. A CHIEF is buried near the trees planted at his 'coming out' and around the grave a thicket grows up. It is taboo for men to cut 769 saplings or brushwood there and since trees grow very fast in the climate and soil of the Nyakyusa valley, the thicket soon becomes [137] a grove, and there sacrifices to the dead chief are made. The priests look for the stone planted at his marriage, and place the offering beside it. How long a chief is so honoured depends on how conspicuous he was as a ruler or warrior, and perhaps also on [782] whether the sacrifices are judged to be efficient in producing rain and health or not. Mbyanga and Kabale, two groves which are particularly honoured, were the shrines of founders of expanding lineages. At Mbyanga was planted a cutting of a tree which sprouted from the grave of Mwakisambwe (30) who had first occupied the country in which Mbyanga is situated. He is often spoken of as having been 'buried' at Mbyanga, in fact he was carried back ten miles to Lubaga, whence he had come, for burial. But he is worshipped at Mbyanga and we attended a sacrifice there for which his great-great-great-grandson, Mwaihojo (147) the chief, provided a cow, and Mwaihojo's grandsons ate the holy food. In contrast to this, the grave of Mwaipopo's (116) younger brother, who had once ruled a country but was defeated in war and whose sons had died, was completely neglected; no one sacrificed there. We knew more than a dozen chiefs' groves at which sacrifices were made, and there must have been a great many more in different parts of BuNyakyusa.

643 Since every ruling chief normally had two heirs, sacrifices 769 involved co-operation between independent chiefdoms—two chiefs at the grove of their father, four at that of their grandfather, and so on. But if there is friction between the chiefs, some branches of the lineage cease to participate, saying that the connexion is 'too distant', and celebrate at the groves of their nearer ancestors only. This happened at the sacrifice of Mbyanga which we [578] attended (*vide infra*, pp. 79-81). The sanction for co-operation is [688] the belief that quarrelling between kinsmen annoys the shades and

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

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9. SHRINE IN THE SACRED GROVE, MBYANGA

[Facing p. 71]

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955) 1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

people's needs. The importance of this can scarcely be overemphasised for a peasant people who are adopting a cash economy and are socially and emotionally deeply attached to their land – their single, continuous source of capital and their tribal heritage. Apart from the possibilities of labour migration which, so far at any rate, are taken up only temporarily and by the younger men, there are no economic opportunities and no capital to compete with the land. In non-economic life the land remains supreme as the persisting basis of society.

As late as 1940 the District Commissioner, Rungwe, was able to write that there was most generally sufficient land for the people's needs in all parts of the country, and the only competition was perhaps in respect of the very best and most fertile tracts, as had always been the case. G. Wilson recorded similar remarks in the late nineteen-thirties. That these observations were correct cannot be doubted. It is known, for instance, that until the post-war years in the Lake Plains – where now land shortage is most acute – there was a broad belt of mainly unoccupied, uncultivated bushland, infested with game, extending from the Livingstone Mountains in the east to the Nyasaland border in the south-west. There were extensive, more or less empty areas in almost every chiefdom. The people were subsistence farmers only, and also banana eaters, and in this well-watered country their agricultural requirements were adequately met on very modest holdings, from most of which two harvests a year could be gathered.

In the brief period of little more than ten years the situation has altered radically to the point of a general shortage of land (except for some parts in the north-west), and especially in the Lake Plains the available land is quite insufficient to meet the demands of the inhabitants. This critical change is the result partly of an increasing population, augmented by some immigration from other tribal areas; but more especially it is the result of the demands for larger arable holdings to meet cash crop aspirations – i.e., money earning. Although both coffee and paddy rice cultivation had begun before 1939, and both were encouraged and developed during the War years, it was not until after 1945 that both of these cash crops became well and generally established and the demand for money incomes became universal.

III

It was in order to investigate this new situation, which was beginning to become serious and to cause concern to Government, that I made a sociological survey in 1955. I had already spent some months in the country in 1954 investigating labour migration in order to provide Government with information and to make recommendations to deal with the problems arising. The second period of work occupied about five months. During both enquiries I was extremely fortunate in having the use of the excellent monographs of G. and M. Wilson who had carried out a conventional anthropological study of the Nyakyusa between 1934 and 1938. Without their basic work behind me, neither of my two studies would have been possible in so brief a time, and I must gratefully acknowledge the real value of their writings.

The intention had been that a complete enquiry should be made into Nyakyusa land conditions in all parts of the country, and that it should culminate in a full recording of tribal land law and custom with a view to its possible reform. In the event only the initial enquiry in the field in the Lake Plains was completed and the results of that alone are described in this essay. Whereas in former days there were probably few distinctive differences between the various parts of the country, in modern times with the introduction of different cash crops, with differential population growths and varying demands on the land, important divergences seem to be arising. For example,

11:Thwaites C-5 (ca. 1942) 1944
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

[P.236 B]

WANYAKYUSA AGRICULTURE

By D. H. Thwaites, Agricultural Assistant, Tanganyika Territory

132 some rain falls every month in the part north of Tukuyu. Very heavy rains occur at times, such as in 1935 when 139 inches are recorded on the lake shore in the month of April. In November, 1942, 12¼ inches fell in eighteen hours in Tukuyu. The average mean temperature for Tukuyu is 23.66°C. The range is low while monthly variation average is only 5-6°C.

Soils and Vegetation

134 The district may be divided into three sections according to soil and vegetation types.
[133] The higher altitudes to the north are dominated geologically by the extinct volcanic range extending round Rungwe Mountain. The dark soil, composed of decaying vegetable matter overlying volcanic ash in varying layers, is, generally speaking, fairly fertile, depending on
● 137 the age of the subsoil. The vegetation is dominated by rain forest, though much of this has been destroyed. Grass (*Hyparrhenia* spp. *Digitaria horizontalis, Setaria*) and *Crotalaria* spp., with high *Sesbania* and *Dodonea* shrub on the slopes of the mountain range, are found with *Milletia, Ficus* and *Cissus* spp., and occasional stretches of bamboo on the hill sides and in the river beds and ravines. To the west of Tukuyu, woodlands of *Brachystegia*, associated with *Albizzia* and *Parkia* spp., cover such areas as are not cultivated and where the grasses (*Hyparrhenia* and *Digitaria* spp.) can only be burnt during October owing to the wet climate.

134 In the medium altitudes south of Tukuyu, the soil is a red clay loam, derived from granite with intrusions of dolorite, diorite,
[135] basalt and quartz. It is in the area of these soils that hot springs, lime, coal and mica occur. This part is heavily wooded with
137 *Brachystegia* associated with *Albizzia, Dalbergia, Ficus, Cissus* spp. and *Chlorophora excelsa*, but is at present being gradually cut out to make room for cultivation. No forests of economic value occur, except for fuel, small quantities of wild rubber vine, *Landolphia* spp., which have become of value in wartime, and some pockets of *Adina microcephala*. Dominant grasses are *Imperata cylindrica, Digitaria*, and *Hyparrhenia* spp.

134 The lower altitudes below 2,000 feet are situated in a wide plain along the northern
[133] and western shores of Lake Nyasa, and this is composed of soils mostly transported from the highlands. These are extremely fertile. The sub-
[137] soil is granite and the top soil varies greatly in thickness.

137 in thickness. This part is devoid of timber except along some river banks—*Albizzia* and *Acacia* spp.—and fuel has to be carried some distance. The dominant herbs are *Crotalaria striata* and *Hyparrhenia* sp., with *Phragmites* and *Pennisetum purpureum* along the rivers.

Methods of Cultivation

241 462 The work of cultivation is equally divided between the sexes. After the plots have been cleared and hand-hoed by the men, it is women's work to plant, clear, harvest, winnow and sell at the market. Men's work consists of clearing, hoeing and looking after the cattle.

242 241 Rotation of crops is practised, as it must be in an area where all land is far from productive. In the highlands, 9,500 feet to 5,000 feet, the rotation in valleys is sweet potatoes, finger millet, groundnuts, finger millet, groundnuts, finger millet and rest for five years, or sweet potatoes, maize for five years and rest for five years. On the hillsides, finger millet and pigeon pea or finger millet alone are sown every fourth year.

In the medium altitudes, between 5,000 feet and 2-3,000 feet, the rotation is finger millet, maize and yams, beans, rested and grazed. Continual planting of rice cannot take place as fertility is so quickly impaired.

In the lower altitudes, below 2,000 feet, rice is planted continuously for some 15 years and the land is then rested and grazed for about 8 years.

Diet and Food Crops

262 No one food is the staple throughout the district, but plantains, maize and sweet potatoes for the higher altitudes and rice on the lake shore are generally eaten, with additions that vary from area to area.

243 Maize is planted both on contoured ridges and on flat land. Holes are drilled generally 3 feet apart and each hole has 3 seeds planted [241] in it. Maize is usually interplanted with beans or Bambarra groundnuts, groundnuts, cowpeas or pigeon peas. Planting takes place in the highlands in July to September and harvesting in February to April. In the medium altitudes, two crops are planted annually, in November to February and again in May to June. In the lower altitudes, however, little maize is grown [251] and this is sown in November to December and harvested in March and April. Maize is stored in mud-covered basket granaries or is [262] sold as soon as it is dried. It is eaten roasted or boiled with beans. The varieties of maize grown vary but they are mostly of the hard flint type.